



CEDARVILLE PROTECTED ENVIRONMENT DECLARED

23rd October 2015

Start

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is proud to announce the newly declared Cedarville Protected Environment in the Eastern Cape, by the Eastern Cape MEC for Economic Development and Environmental Affairs, which borders the small rural town of Cedarville. The quiet, roadside village of Cedarville in the Eastern Cape will never be quite the same again.



Cobus Theron, the EWT's African Crane Conservation Programme, Drakensberg Regional Coordinator, who led and facilitated this process over the last three years explains: "Much emphasis has historically been placed on the creation of Nature Reserves as the only option to conserve habitats. The reality however is that many conservation opportunities exist on commercial agricultural farms and the Protected Environment provides an ideal framework to promote conservation within and around the agricultural landscapes of the Cedarville area".

Critically, the declaration comes in the wake of increased mining activity in the area and the new status of the land will secure this beautiful landscape for many years to come. At almost 18 000 ha in size, the Cedarville Protected Environment is the third largest Protected Environment declared in the Eastern Cape consisting of privately owned land that forms part of the Eastern Cape's Biodiversity Stewardship Programme. This Programme allows private or communal landowners to enter into a contractual agreement with government in which both parties undertake to promote conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services, in this case, within agricultural landscapes.

The Protected Environment will thus pave the way for the protection of certain vegetation types and species that have up until now, received minimal protection in this far flung corner of the Eastern Cape interior. Iconic species such as Blue Crane, Grey Crowned Crane, Aardvark and Oribi, as well as threatened vegetation types such as Mabela Sandy Grassland will now enjoy far greater and optimal protection in this new Protected Environment.

The African Crane Conservation Programme regards the Protected Environment as critical for the conservation of cranes. The large flat areas within the Protected Environment (known as the "Flats") serve as foraging grounds for large flocks of Blue Cranes and Grey Crowned Cranes, while the more mountainous grassland sections provide perfect summer breeding grounds for Blue Cranes. Many streams that originate from here also feed small wetlands which also provides suitable nest sites for pairs of Grey Crowned Cranes. The Protected Environment includes a wide variety of habitats that include grasslands, thicket and wetlands that serve as the water factory for the mighty Umzimvubu River. "We anticipate that in time, additional landowners will join the programme to ultimately form a conservation corridor between the Cedarville Protected Environment and the Matatiele Nature Reserve in the west." remarked Theron.

Much of the area under the Cedarville Protected Environment previously formed part of the Cedarville Conservancy. According to Gerbrand Nel, one of the farmers who participated in the process, "stepping up to Protected Environment seemed like the next logical step". "I urge everyone to make a trip to Cedarville to experience the beauty and scenery of this special corner of our country." Concludes Cobus.

The African Crane Conservation Programme is a partnership between the Endangered Wildlife Trust and International Crane Foundation (ICF). The programme focusses on securing and improving the conservation status of Africa's four resident crane species and the wetland and grassland habitats upon which they depend. This is achieved through actions to reduce threats to the species and their habitats, by working that closely with local communities and key stakeholders to manage catchments sustainably for both people and cranes, and empowering individuals and organisations to implement conservation action.

For further information about the African Crane Conservation Programme and the declaration of the Cedarville Protected Environment visit www.ewt.org.za or contact Cobus Theron on +27 33 701 1323/+27 79 5082156 or cobust@ewt.org.za.

Photos Available on Request: Image Caption: Celebrating the Cedarville Protected Environment Declaration, landowners with EWT's Cobus Theron

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